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ART. XIV.—*Rambles in Italy, in the years 1816....17. By an American.* pp. 371. Baltimore, 1818.

IN this book there is such a variety of matter and want of method, that though we have read it through very assiduously, we believe that we have forgotten much that is worth remembering; and we fear that our reflections upon it have contracted something of the same vague and desultory character. We know few works which would better serve as illustrations of the doctrine of the association of ideas. Many of our author's chapters are in fact all episode; his imagination seems to return to the main story by compulsion only. Thus the view of the Villa Pamfili in Rome naturally leads his reflections to Ermenonville in France; and this again,—after a very copious description,—to several Italian verses from the *Jerusalem Delivered*, descriptive of the gardens of Armida. A traveller, like a reviewer, has indubitably the right of making one subject the occasion and excuse for another; but we think these remarks necessary to preserve our readers from the disappointment which we ourselves suffered, in finding so much more of rambling than of Italy.

Our author alleges in his preface, that he can say little new, because (among other reasons) Italy has been fully and faithfully described by Eustace. To us, this is at least as novel a fact as any contained in the work; but allowing for a moment the correctness of the excuse, for we do not mean to impeach our author's veracity, we regret that his book should be in so many places almost a copy of Eustace's descriptions. From a similar admiration of Madame De Stael, he is led to imitate frequently, and generally without success, her fanciful speculations. He has a great deal of exquisitely nice reasoning, many trains of thought above the sphere of common understandings, if not beyond the bounds of common sense, and an abundance of what is often called fine writing. But we can trust ourselves no longer in retracing the mazes of his 'forêts of no meaning.' His style is too ambitious. His sentences must be figurative and harmonious, and are often interspersed and rounded off with quotations neither new nor appropriate. Among all the charms of Italy, none seems to have engrossed his thoughts more than the language; and Italian phrases form a considerable portion of almost every page. We might object to this circumstance on our own account;

but we know that it will be an additional recommendation to many of his countrymen, whose extraordinary (we may say incredible) proficiency in foreign languages often in a few months obliterates much of their own from their memory, and obliges them (no doubt greatly against their own desire) to employ French or Italian expressions on the most ordinary occasions. Having thus mentioned a few of our objections to this author, we acknowledge with pleasure that we think his faults abundantly outweighed by several remarks, strikingly original and practical, and still more by the general tone of his moral and national reflections. His defects are evidently the result rather of a perversion, than of a want of genius. We select the following from a large number of passages, as a proof of the originality, perspicuity and justness of his observations, when he can forget Eustace, and Madame de Stael, and the Italian Poets, when he is willing to think for himself, to speak in his own tongue and in plain prose.

‘The Appenines have been often traversed, and their scenery repeatedly described. But few travellers in passing them have been sufficiently at their ease to feel those sublime beauties, which belong to nature in these elevated and sequestered regions. The result of my inquiries concerning them was, generally, that the roads over them were dangerous, the atmosphere cold, and the inns detestable. How attentive we ought to be to the weaknesses and deficiencies of our own minds, who undertake to describe a country; and of all the sources of error to which we are exposed, there is none, the influence of which ought to be so strenuously resisted, as of those by which the decisions of taste are likely to be affected. A bare description of facts, however interesting it may be to the geologist, the natural historian and the botanist, afford but an imperfect idea of a country. It cannot express that moral charm, nor exhibit those general features of external beauty, which, as they are among the most pleasing, so they are the most essential traits, by which nations and countries are characterized. There are few persons, whose taste is wholly exempt from the influence of local and accidental associations, but there are many, who see no beauty in a country, that does not afford smooth roads and good taverns. In America we laugh at the petulant remarks, respecting our own country of foreigners, whom an unlucky bottle of wine, or a cross landlord, has sent away displeased with every thing they saw. I have known a traveller at Rome, positively refuse to visit *Tivoli*, in consequence of the account which he received of the bad accom-

modations at the inn, and numerous instances might be adduced, where the prospect of an indifferent dinner has been sufficient to cloud the bright skies of Italy, and to throw a shade over its classic scenes.' pp. 247—249.

But highly as we estimate our author's genius, we could dwell with still greater pleasure on his feelings and principles. He never loses sight of his country, and she is often recalled to his thoughts by those very allurements, among which, if any where, she might be excusably forgotten.

We trust that these frequent effusions of a rational and ardent patriotism, would alone furnish all the remuneration that our countrymen could desire, for perusing the whole of the '*Rambles*;' but we refer more particularly to the remarks in the Introduction, on the comparative charms of the scenery of Italy and America. He has, indeed, in our opinion, rather overrated the beauties of the Italian landscape; particularly when he ascribes to the atmosphere the power of giving a peculiar lustre to the heavenly bodies; but as we believe that he felt all that he says, we consider him entitled to additional credit, for turning with so evident a pleasure to the contemplation of a country like ours,—a country abounding in immense districts that display no ornaments but those of nature, and no ravages but those of time. The selection of such a subject is indeed in itself a public service, which well deserves our gratitude.

It is but lately that we have learned to contemplate our own scenery; and we recollect no previous attempt by any of our countrymen, to illustrate it by a comparison with that of European regions. Our author has, we think, met, in this part of the work, with the success which he deserved for his patriotism alone. Indeed we consider the bare publication of these *Rambles*, without any reference to their intrinsic merit, as a fortunate circumstance; for the narrations of American travellers are at present necessarily valuable for their direct tendency to excite, among our countrymen, a closer attention to the general objects and effects of visiting foreign nations. There is no part of a modern education on which the ideas of men, in this country at least, are so indefinite. It is surprising that its benefits and disadvantages have been so seldom accurately estimated and compared, whether we consider the frequency with which the subject occurs, its high and unquestionable importance, or the num-

ber of eminent men of all ages, qualified to do it justice, not only by their talents, but by actual and ample experience. But it is equally natural, that opinions on a subject so slightly investigated, should be contradictory as well as vague; that many should deny altogether the utility of travelling; and that others of a contrary opinion should suppose that they sum up all that can be adduced in its favour, in an observation by no means unfrequent, that every young man should indulge his desire of visiting foreign countries, in order to be certain that it was not worth his while.

What then are the real advantages of travelling?—for we do not consider the mere gratification of an idle and self-created curiosity, as deserving of the name. We are told in the few scanty and scattered remarks which we can collect from books, that they are information and amusement in general. These objects, it must be acknowledged, however important, are much too indefinite to be ever present to the traveller and to inspire him with a lively and constant interest. This is a truth, which we think might be deduced from the general laws of the human mind, and to which those who have explored foreign regions are generally too well qualified to bear witness by a tardy experience. Those who value either their immediate pleasure or their eventual success, should direct their attention from the very commencement of their tour to some single important purpose. This should be the ‘motive, guide, original and end’ of every effort, the central luminary of their whole system of thought. This will inspire them with new energy in the formation and the execution of all their decisions, will concentrate and preserve those reflections, which would be scattered and forgotten, will render definite those which would be vague, and create a thousand which would otherwise be wanting. Let those, then, whose course is guided and limited by no professional or commercial projects, consider themselves as particularly the servants of the public, and let the advancement of the literature, the science, or the arts of their country, constitute not only the ultimate but the immediate object of their wishes, hopes, and designs.

Nor let it be said, that, in exhorting the traveller to attempt something for the improvement of his countrymen, we are proposing what is too far beyond his reach to excite constant and strenuous exertion. With our countrymen at

least, the end is as practicable, as the attempt is elevated. In a community like ours, rendered so susceptible of farther instruction by the diffusion of some degree of information through all its classes, where no distinction is known but that which results from education, where the means of improvement, though not yet collected into our public institutions, are often largely possessed by individuals, the dissemination of useful knowledge, in every possible manner, is the duty of every citizen singly, and the obligation to its performance is not greater than the encouragement. With our national age and general information, there is daily increasing a willingness to profit by the experience of other communities ; a spirit which has ever proved the sure source of public prosperity, both in ancient and modern times ; which led the Romans to make the whole world a school for their instruction, and thus extend the bounds of their knowledge, with those of their conquests ; which has impelled Great Britain to borrow and improve most of those useful arts, to which she now owes her very existence.

We would impress the traveller not with an extravagant opinion of his powers, but with a proper value for his advantages, and we are assured that the benefits of his researches, if neither retained through indolence, nor communicated with arrogance, must inevitably be extended far beyond himself. In these observations on the proper objects of travelling, we fear that we have deserved the charge, not of suggesting any crude and extravagant speculations, but of reiterating trite and self-evident maxims. Yet obvious as they may be, so far from constantly influencing the practice of our citizens, they seem to have seldom excited their serious reflections. How else could it be that while we hear so often of the direct proportion between the benefits resulting from a foreign tour, and the information with which it is commenced, while it is allowed that to a complete traveller, as to a complete orator, no species of knowledge is useless, and that his previous studies should be limited only by his time, while many of the requisite preparations are so well understood that we forbear to mention them,—there should be one, which, indispensable as it is to the attainment of the object we have suggested, is rarely recommended and still more rarely sought,—an acquaintance with some of the leading characteristics of his own country ? We believe, that,

previous to their departure for Europe, few (we might almost say none) of our young men are acquainted in any considerable degree with the most prominent circumstances of our national condition, with our geographical features, our physical and moral resources, with our actual progress in the useful arts or even with the principles of our constitution, few and simple as they are. Our knowledge of these is generally confined to such facts, as are accidentally gained in conversation, or periodically recalled on public occasions. An extended acquaintance with our own annals is an acquisition, which we should suppose would be valued more than it is, were it only for its rarity.

Our historical reading is generally pursued in a chronological order; the course of our knowledge is the reverse of that of our feelings, and begins at the edge of the circle, of which our home is the centre, and we are better acquainted with almost every age and country, than with those in which we live. For these points, on which knowledge is most important, and ignorance most inexcusable, we seem to suppose that there will always be time, and that we shall one day become thoroughly acquainted with them, (it matters little when,) by a sort of fatality. Yet, however ardent the desire of travellers to promote their country's benefit, however thorough their acquaintance with her advantages and her wants, their researches will be but slightly beneficial either to her or to themselves, unless directed by a chastened and discriminating curiosity. Our young men generally set out on their foreign excursions with the determination of leaving nothing unseen, and the hope of combining in a single tour all the advantages of every one who has gone before them. They must explore every object which has been accidentally recommended to their attention, either in books or in conversation, which has captivated their youthful imaginations by casual associations, no matter how insignificant their origin; and are frequently led to traverse extensive and uninteresting regions by the bare music of a name. This whimsical impulse is often dignified by the title of enthusiasm, and perverts the traveller's judgment in investigating as well as in selecting the objects of his attention, by rendering him ever more willing to be deceived than disappointed. Since too it is as shortlived as it is fervid, it often leads to the opposite extreme, and impels him, after wast-

ing his powers on objects of little importance or transient interest, to devote only a languid attention to those of real moment, or perhaps to leave off his travels precisely where he should begin them. This feeling is, indeed, only the result of the common neglect of young men to acquire such extensive and accurate ideas of the countries which they propose to explore, as would enable them to affix to every subject its due relative value.

Few, if any, set out with a just impression of the number and variety of the objects of attention contained in older countries, and the comparative shortness of their time, and weakness of their memory. They have generally yet to learn that the mere gratification of the passion for novelty should be the smallest part of the end proposed ; that the superiority of one traveller over another is owing, not to any difference between their routes, for these are often nearly the same ; still less to a few trifling diversities, which have arisen from accidental circumstances ;—but to their different proficiency in habits of cool and vigilant observation ; and that he, who would render his tour productive of any thing more than a selfish and transient gratification, should accustom himself not only to notice facts, but to draw conclusions. In this respect men are too apt to suffer their minds to be merely passive, and instead of making the information which they have collected in their excursions, the foundation of frequent, close, and systematic deductions, to trust to the improvement, which they derive insensibly, from unsought and desultory reflections. Yet how numerous are the advantages, which our citizens may derive from visiting Europe, and that too with scarcely a single painful effort. They consist not so much in the information actually acquired, extensive as it may be, as in the mental and moral discipline, which the traveller necessarily undergoes in the pursuit. Were all the facts that he has observed obliterated from his memory, he would still be richly rewarded, if they left behind them those new habits of thought and of conduct, of which they were originally the foundation.

Travelling breaks the continuity of our life ;—we are removed from the scenes where we imbibed our early prejudices, from the friends who are accustomed to overlook our habitual faults ; we can review with comparative calmness our former course, can learn to value its pleasures, to im-



prove its advantages and to correct its errors, and can return to it with an union of ardour and experience which we enjoy at no other period. By travelling, we may learn, from a constant succession of various ideas, in a few months, what could otherwise be obtained only by the lapse of many years ;—we shall partly forget a few of the features of home only that they may be rendered, on our return, still more attractive by novelty ; and shall thus obviate the tendency of familiarity,—a tendency so often remarked and lamented,—to render us cold to the most striking objects and the most important truths. We may then apply that spirit of observation, which has been improved, if not aroused by the view of other countries, to those beauties of our own which were before rendered uninteresting merely by constant and cursory contemplation. A taste even for rural objects, simple and striking as they are, is often not less acquired than natural ; and much advantage is frequently derived from travelling in other regions, even amid scenery precisely similar to our own. We believe that there are few Americans who do not look with additional interest on the face of their native land, after having seen a likeness of so many of its features in the valleys of Switzerland.

But the faculty of enjoying the scenery of his own country, though we think it an advantage by no means contemptible, is far from being the greatest that an American derives from exploring others. The rational opinions of our moral and political condition, which it suggests, or at least greatly strengthens, as they are highly useful to the citizens of all communities, are more particularly necessary to us. Our remote situation from the most powerful and civilized portions of the world, highly fortunate as it is, has some weighty and obvious disadvantages, which it depends greatly on ourselves to remedy. With a large part of Europe, we have little else than a political and commercial intercourse. We know them only as communities, and are too apt to judge of their domestic character by that of the measures of their government. It is only by travelling that we can know in any considerable degree, their virtues as individuals. This would lead us to perceive, as we ought, the absurdity of that spirit of bitterness, too often displayed by turns in this country against the different portions of the European world, which involves whole communities in the censure due only

to the smaller though the more powerful part, which has no better excuse than the ignorance or insolence of a few foreign writers, and which is not more unjust to others than it is incompatible with our own dignity. This would enable us to feel, that we cannot acknowledge more plainly the force of a virulence deserving only contempt, than by reciprocating it in our answers ; that by examining dispassionately the censures of our enemies, we may become acquainted with those defects, from which, exaggerated and multiplied as they are, we cannot pretend to be wholly exempt, and that the unmerited prejudices of other nations against a power so protected from foreign violence as is ours, can eventually prove injurious only to those whom they influence. Far from finding in their unfounded reproaches, any justification for that national vanity, which may excuse many of them, and provokes many more, which descended to us by inheritance and has been cherished by our situation, we should discern in them only an additional reason for its suppression. We might learn how chimerical it is to hope that foreign nations will divest themselves of prejudices naturally inherent, how fruitless as well as servile to covet that praise which is generally given in scanty measure or from sinister motives ; we should see clearly the necessity of being the judges of our own merit, and the consequent importance, as we value our permanent improvement, of estimating soberly and moderately what we have done already. Our own experience would inspire us with a more lively aversion to that want or disregard of delicacy on national topics, which is so often permitted, both in this country and in England, to violate the feelings of unoffending individuals, and which, though displayed principally in private conversation and ephemeral publications, has produced such evident, forcible and permanent effects on the public feeling of both communities.

If the real fruits of travelling consist in any degree, as we have before observed, less in facts than in conclusions, we need not wonder that they are so often unperceived in others by those who have never experienced them. They are displayed not merely by observations relating directly to the countries which the traveller has explored, but often by his opinions on subjects apparently unconnected with them, by remarks of which he has himself forgotten the original sources, by the increased accuracy and liberality of his gen-

eral style of thinking. We need scarcely say any thing of the improvement which his manners derive almost necessarily from his transient acquaintance with a constant succession of strangers, for whose attentions he must be indebted almost to those alone. Will any say, that the question is not what are the possible but what are the actual benefits of travelling, and that these are few in comparison with the time and money which is uniformly devoted to acquire them, that to derive from it all the advantages that it is capable of producing, advantages of which we generally gain even a speculative knowledge only after our travels are concluded, requires a degree of activity and steadiness, possessed by few or none, that they do not dispute for a moment the benefits of an extensive and accurate knowledge of Europe, but that this, as well as every other important end of going abroad, could be gained in a shorter period at home by persevering industry, that we abound already with accounts of foreign countries by professed travellers, that our young men can acquire or communicate little that is new or useful? In answering these objections, we shall pass over the advantages which all admit to be owing to travelling alone, and barely mention the superiority of the knowledge resulting from observation over that derived from books (though equally extensive) merely on account of its liveliness. With these important exceptions we allow for a moment that the information generally gained abroad could be acquired equally well at home, but would retort on our opponents their own question. Is this, however feasible, ever actually accomplished? To devote, during our residence in America, such an attention to the European world as is excited every day in the minds of those who actually visit it, seems to require an enlightened foresight and active and patient industry, which would more than enable us to realize all the possible advantages of travelling. Have we not all heard of the difficulty of obtaining exact and unprejudiced histories till years have elapsed after the occurrence of the events which they record? Have we yet to discover how far we can depend on the accounts of others for our knowledge of the present state of the world, especially when we consider that scarcely any have been published by our own countrymen, and that our ideas of one community must be alloyed, we know not to what degree, with the prejudices of the members of another?

Or if we would learn from facts rather than from reasoning the degree of credit which we should generally give to the written accounts of travellers, we may examine with all due allowance for our own prejudices most of the descriptions published by foreigners who have visited the United States. There is so much in mere colouring, there are so many ways of telling the same truth, that we should betray a gross ignorance of human nature, as well as an extravagant partiality to our own countrymen, in supposing that their accounts of Europe, however candid their intentions, should be perfectly free from error. Yet this consideration seems to furnish a strong reason for acquiring a knowledge of its more important and interesting regions from personal observation, or if our ideas of them must be tinged by national prejudices, let it be only by our own. Could we even rely far more confidently on the fairness of those who have gone before us, we see no adequate reason for confining ourselves solely to this indirect and incomplete intelligence. In every other path to information, it is allowed that our knowledge will be useful and satisfactory, in proportion as it is derived immediately from its original fountains.

We are generally directed at once to the best productions, because others have read them before ; we are not therefore advised to become acquainted with them only through extracts, abridgments, and reviews. No truth is better known than that the ideas excited in the minds of two men by any subject of contemplation are never precisely alike, and the abundant acquisitions of our predecessors are rather held out to us as unanswerable arguments to pursue the self-same track. It is only in travelling, in becoming acquainted with the present condition of the world in which we are acting, in reading mankind, that we are told not only that we need not but should not examine for ourselves. This forgetfulness of the analogy which exists between travelling and reading has given rise to another objection, as trite and as singular as that which we have first attempted to obviate, and this is, that it will be impossible to direct or limit the traveller's inquiries, that if he will be content to know nothing from the mere representations of others, the world will indeed be all before him ; not however to afford him a place of rest, but a sphere of continual motion. Now to obviate this evil, is much easier in fact than in theory, since it depends entirely on the judgment

of the individual, the same judgment that regulates the degree of attention to be given to all the various studies necessarily composing a liberal education, and prevents the pursuit of any one, to the injurious exclusion of the rest.

There are two more objections to travelling, which we have reserved to the conclusion, partly because they are the most general and most solemn of all, and partly because they are supposed to operate with a peculiar force, against encouraging the young men of our own country to visit Europe, the deprivation of their morals and the diminution of their patriotism. The first of these objections we should think sufficiently answered by observing, that it seems to make morality the offspring of circumstances rather than of principle, a sort of household divinity, a magic power, whose influence over us ceases, when we step out of a certain narrow circle. But we believe farther, that the usual opinion of the danger of moral contamination incurred by an American travelling in Europe, results from an idea of the comparative virtue of the old and new world much too flattering to ourselves. Without giving up altogether our claim to a greater degree of general morality, than is enjoyed in older and more crowded communities, we cannot but think, that to many of our young men Europe has proved rather the theatre than the school of dissipation; that they leave our great cities with a depravity, which is merely displayed or at most little aggravated, during their residence in foreign capitals. If we must allow that there is no exaggeration in the ideas generally entertained in this country of the number and variety of facilities for vice existing abroad, we maintain that the traveller is protected in a great measure from their influence by circumstances which, as they are peculiar to his residence there, are seldom justly and candidly estimated by those of our citizens, whose whole lives have been passed at home. Dissipation is often the result of want of occupation, and in the splendid cities of Europe, his attention is perpetually allured and engaged by a succession of new and refined pleasures. At home, his life is all before him, and he may allow himself no inconsiderable indulgence in licentiousness, in the hope of retrieving his mispent hours by subsequent extraordinary efforts. Abroad, there are more than objects enough for all his time, and unless he sets out from home indifferent to all its valuable recommendations, he will feel little inclined to protract an

absence which must necessarily be long. In the society of strangers and foreigners he will at least be secured from the most insidious and forcible of all temptations, the corrupt conversation and example of early and familiar associates. We believe indeed that the allurements to vice which an American encounters abroad, except those arising from the society of the depraved part of his own countrymen, are on the whole less to be dreaded than those which he would experience at home in the same period, and we feel still more fully assured, that they are far exceeded by those, to which he is ordinarily exposed in our colleges, and at a much earlier age. We think too, that not a little is gained by throwing a young man on his own resources, by removing him from inspection and rendering him immediately accountable for all his conduct to himself alone. His actions will then flow more from reflection and less from habit or accident, he will be relieved from the temptation which often results from the very pressure of external restraint. If he possesses a mind, which can be altogether unmoved by considerations so flattering and imposing as these, if he can become acquainted with the weight of his responsibility, and the extent of his liberty, only to disregard the one, and abuse the other, he must have acquired a depravity from his previous education, which should render us more modest, in extolling the general morality of our country, or more willing to part as long as possible with those, whose presence would contribute so plainly to its corruption.

Those who allow that a degraded mind alone can yield itself entirely to gross dissipation, are not a little influenced by the dread of another evil, which they consider as scarcely less injurious in its effects, and far more extensive in its operation, the tendency of absence to weaken our attachment to home. Against the general force of this objection, the last which we shall notice, we may urge its opposition to the descriptions of human nature, whether historical or poetical, of every age and nation.

On what subject have poets more delighted to dwell, than on the traveller's fondness for his native land? They have represented it as sometimes transiently forgotten in the various allurements of other regions, but as always returning with undiminished vigour, as increasing with the length of his absence, as surviving even death. If these fictions were founded in no degree in reality, if the principles that they

illustrate were not those of every heart, would they have proved to authors and their readers, such a frequent and yet such an interesting subject of contemplation? Yet on this theme, it is difficult even for poetical fictions to go beyond actual history. How indeed could the tenacity of this love of country be more plainly, forcibly and generally evinced, than by the place assigned in the legal systems of so many ancient and modern nations, to the pains of exile? But it is by a reference to actual and particular examples, and not merely by theoretical deduction, that we shall learn the true effect of visiting other regions, on our fondness for our own. Polybius travelled from Greece to Italy, and passed several years in learning by actual observation the power and majesty of Rome, only that he might render his works more useful to his own degraded and oppressed fellow citizens. The contemplation of the monuments of Athens produced in the mind of Cicero not a contempt for his own country then comparatively unadorned, not an indolent or desponding admiration of the splendour of others, since it was not by indulging sentiments like these, that the Greeks had been enabled to excite his own veneration, but a determination to lead the Romans from the mere study of foreign literature, to the improvement of their own, and to strive to supply in their national character, all that was yet wanting of Grecian greatness.

It is but too common to underrate the depth and tenacity of national feeling, from mistaken opinions of its origin. By many who possess it largely, it is considered as a blind and inexplicable, though venerable and useful fondness for the objects that have long surrounded us, which, as it is acquired by constant association, can be deadened by absence. But how closely, how obviously is it connected, not only with our feelings, but with our principles and our interest. It does not result merely from a natural sentiment of regard to the country which gave us birth and protected our infancy, nor from the thousand associations even with the most trifling objects of our early contemplation, nor from our fondness for our relations, nor from our regard to those friendships which can be matured only by a long intimacy, which it required much of our lives to form, and which the remainder could hardly replace. The traveller's hopes, as well as his recollections, must all be directed homewards. All his wishes for

the good of others,—and these, though powerfully operative in but few minds, are wholly wanting in still fewer,—all his views of ambition, will there find their most extensive if not their only sphere. The relinquishment of his desire to return involves in it that of so many other feelings, that it can result only from singular circumstances, or from a complete and incredible revolution of all his sentiments. We should naturally suppose, and that too without reference to facts, that the difficulty would be, not to keep alive, but to regulate his patriotism, to prevent it from blinding him to the merit of other nations, from obtruding itself so often on his thoughts as to harass his feelings and distract his attention, and from thus rendering his tour in a great measure fruitless, or impelling him to conclude it prematurely.

If any thing could add to the singularity of the objection, that the love of home is lost by a few years' absence, it is the manner in which we generally hear it enforced on our own countrymen. Why, it is said, will you quit a land and a community like ours, why give up a situation which furnishes every source of rational satisfaction, for the chance of gratifying an idle curiosity? It is distance, and that only, which lends enchantment to the view; you can find nothing really valuable that is wanting here; you will learn to observe with a microscopic eye, the few defects of your own country; from the useless splendour and pernicious luxury of other nations, you will contract a distaste for her simplicity, and disqualify yourselves from again relishing that solid happiness which you are now going to relinquish so blindly. If we understand these various propositions, little else need be urged against them than their inconsistency with each other. We are first told that we need not travel, because our own country possesses all we could desire, and then that we must not, lest she should be deprived of her hold on our feelings by a transient view of others confessedly inferior. If we fear that a few years' absence will thus render our best educated citizens indifferent to her worth, we surely cast a severe reflection either on her or on them, and must acknowledge that we are a community either less favoured or less deserving, than we generally pretend to be. Our enjoyment of our own lot, if it can be thus destroyed by a slight acquaintance with that of other nations, must indeed be miserably transient.



‘ ——— And do we only stand  
By ignorance, is that our happy state ?  
Oh fit foundation laid whereon to build  
Our ruin.’

We believe that the preference entertained for his native land by a well educated American, rests on considerations far more dignified and durable ; that even could his mind be divested of its inherent partiality, every step and every moment, would only serve to impress still more deeply the value of our singular and incontestable advantages, and the comparative insignificance of our wants. His imagination may be engrossed awhile, by the historical and poetical associations of other countries, but he will never seriously envy them the recollections of age, while his own possesses the hopes of youth. His taste may be improved and gratified by their sculpture, their painting and their architecture ; but he will reflect, that ‘ the finest and the rarest of all public monuments is a prosperous and happy population ;’ and in reverting to the simplicity of our civil institutions, the simplicity not of ignorance, but of real refinement, and to that freedom of condition, which affords so liberally to every citizen the means of acquiring comfort, knowledge and power, he can scarcely regret for a moment our inferiority in those elegant arts, which, pleasing as indeed they are, have proved too often, like our variegated autumnal foliage, the splendid symptoms of decay. These, he must be sensible, will increase spontaneously in a free and enlightened community, in proportion to the wealth which can be properly devoted to their support, and that little can now be done, but to prepare for their introduction, by labouring to improve the general taste of our countrymen. He may look on our few national faults with a clearer, but not with a desponding eye ; for he will feel, that though we may have much cause for regret, we have far more for gratitude, that even our enemies ascribe to us not so much the want of talents for improvement, as the neglect or perversion of them, and that the view of our very defects is not more mortifying than encouraging, since they owe their origin and their continuance solely to ourselves.

This sketch of the advantages of visiting other countries is, we are ready to acknowledge, seldom realized, yet it contains nothing visionary or impracticable. Most of these principles, as we believe, have suggested themselves on the

slightest reflection, to all who have reviewed their travels. They are unfortunately almost confined to those, and are generally first felt, if not first learnt, only to regret the neglect of them. Travellers are often unwilling to communicate precepts, that involve so direct a censure on their own practice. But should they not consider, that had they less to regret in themselves, they could indeed advise others with a better grace, but not with a clearer knowledge or greater earnestness ; that those who are to follow their steps are the rightful successors to the benefits of their reflections ; that they owe to their friends and society all the fruit of their labours, though much of it must be plucked from the thorns and briars of repentance ; and that they barely perform an imperious part of a traveller's duty, in communicating to others the counsels of experience, though they must illustrate them by errors instead of by examples.

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ART. XV.—*Greenland and other Poems: by James Montgomery.* pp. 207. New-York, Kirk & Mercein, 1819.

For a few months past, there has been an uncommon dearth of good poetry ; but ordinary poetry is always at hand ; and if we must read and judge it for want of better, we sincerely wish that we may always find it as innocent and respectable as Mr. Montgomery's. We are almost tempted to go farther, and express some regret that he will not write less, and try to finish a work in the style and spirit of the best parts of those he has published, and upon which a man of ambition and talent might be willing to rest his reputation. But there is reason to believe that something more than labour is necessary to make him all that his readers could desire. His later poems are very much better than his early ones ; he has a more correct taste, and puts more meaning and vigour into his treacherously smooth verses. But amendment is not genius, nor a tolerable substitute for it in poetry ;—Mr. Montgomery was moderate at the beginning, and still continues so, in spite of good culture. And it is gratifying to observe his progress towards a more blameless kind of poetry, for he has not enough talent to make us pass over his failures,—in fact, not a jot more than is absolutely